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FRED GALVAN

SPAIN, AND THE U.S.

ANNCR: ON THE OCCASION OF THE FIRST VISIT BY A SPANISH REIGNING MONARCH TO THE UNITED STATES, NEWS ANALYST FRED GALVAN HAS THESE THOUGHTS.

VOICE: IN MARCH, 1776, A HANDFUL OF SPANISH SETTLERS AND SOLDIERS LEFT MEXICO CITY AND JOURNEYED SOME THREE THOUSAND KILOMETERS NORTH ALONG THE PACIFIC COAST TO ARRIVE AT A LARGE BAY LAPPING AT WHAT IS TODAY A PORTION OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA. THE PURPOSE OF THEIR ARDUOUS TREK--TO ESTABLISH PERMANENT SETTLEMENTS THAT WOULD SECURE THE TERRITORY FOR THE SPANISH CROWN. THE EXPEDITION, HEADED BY JUAN BAUTISTA DE ANZA CHOSE A SITE, AND CALLED IT SAN FRANCISCO.

THAT SAME YEAR, ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE AMERICAN CONTINENT, IN THE MIDST OF A REVOLUTIONARY WAR, REPRESENTATIVES OF THIRTEEN BRITISH COLONIES MEETING IN PHILADELPHIA ADOPTED A HISTORIC DOCUMENT ON JULY FOURTH, 1776-- THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE.

BOTH EVENTS UNDOUBTEDLY WERE ON THE MIND OF SPAIN'S YOUNG KING, JUAN CARLOS THE FIRST, AS HE ADDRESSED THE SUCCESSORS OF THAT GROUP OF AMERICAN PATRIOTS-- THE MEMBERS OF BOTH HOUSES OF THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS YESTERDAY (WEDNESDAY).

KING JUAN CARLOS TOLD THE JOINT CONGRESSIONAL SESSION: "TODAY WE RENDER HOMAGE TO THE BIRTH OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, TO THE INDEPENDENCE YOU PROCLAIMED IN THE CONGRESS OF PHILADELPHIA TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO." THIS ACT OF HOMAGE, HE SAID, HAD MORE THAN CEREMONIAL OVERTONES--FOR IT HAD DEEP HISTORIC ROOTS GROWING FROM THE COMMON EXPERIENCES OF BOTH NATIONS. AND HE TRACED THOSE ROOTS. HE WENT BACK TO SPAIN'S SUPPORT OF THE EMBATTLED THIRTEEN COLONIES--A SUPPORT THAT BROUGHT THEM FINANCIAL, MILITARY AND NAVAL AID THEY DESPERATELY NEEDED.

THE SPANISH AID TOOK THE FORM OF OPENING SPANISH AND CARIBBEAN PORTS TO AMERICAN PRIVATEERS PREYING ON BRITISH SHIPPING, AND USING THOSE PORTS AS CHANNELS FOR THE MILITARY EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES THE COLONISTS WERE ABLE TO OBTAIN FROM FRANCE AND SPAIN. A MILITARY EXPEDITION HEADED BY THE SPANISH GOVERNOR OF LOUISIANA, BERNARDO DE GALVEZ, IN 1781 TOOK THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER AND GULF COAST PORTS OF MOBILE, NATCHEZ, BATON ROUGE AND PENSACOLA FROM THE BRITISH. THE GALVEZ EXPEDITION WAS COMPOSED OF SPANISH SOLDIERS, AMERICAN FRONTIERSMEN, INDIANS AND BLACK SLAVES AND FREEMEN. THEIR VICTORIES EFFECTIVELY PROTECTED THE SOUTHERN FLANK OF THE CONTINENTAL ARMY, PAVING THE WAY FOR ITS ULTIMATE VICTORY AT YORKTOWN IN 1781. (END OPT)

IN HIS ADDRESS TO CONGRESS, KING JUAN CARLOS TIED THE HISTORY OF CLOSE TIES BETWEEN SPAIN AND THE UNITED STATES TO HIS MONARCHY'S EFFORTS TO LEAD SPAIN BACK ALONG THE PATH OF REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT FOR ALL SPANIARDS. A KEY ELEMENT OF THAT EFFORT, HE IMPLIED, IS THE SECURITY AND STABILITY THAT THE JOINT DEFENSE ARRANGEMENT WITH THE UNITED STATES PROVIDES. THE TREATY COVERING THAT ARRANGEMENT IS NOW BEFORE THE SENATE FOR RATIFICATION--AN ACTION EXPECTED SOON.

BEHIND THE SPOKEN PLEDGE BY THE SPANISH KING TO LEAD HIS NATION BACK TO DEMOCRACY, OF COURSE, IS THE RECORD OF THE PAST SIX MONTHS IN SPAIN. IN THAT TIME, THE SPANISH GOVERNMENT HAS EVOLVED A PLAN FOR PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS THAT WILL MARK A MAJOR STEP TOWARD THE GOAL OUTLINED BY KING JUAN CARLOS. SOME WEEKS AGO, HIS PRIME MINISTER, CARLOS ARIAS NAVARRO ANNOUNCED PLANS FOR A REFERENDUM ON CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES TO PREPARE FOR GENERAL ELECTIONS EARLY NEXT YEAR.

SPAIN'S MORE RELAXED POLITICAL CLIMATE IS WELCOME NEWS FOR THE UNITED STATES AND ITS WESTERN ALLIES. THEY RECOGNIZE SPAIN'S STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE TO THEIR ATLANTIC AND MEDITERRANEAN DEFENSES. AT THE SAME TIME THEY ARE CONVINCED THAT SPAIN'S STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE TO THEM CAN ONLY BE MEASURED BY ITS POLITICAL STABILITY--A STABILITY THAT THE SPANISH GOVERNMENT NOW RECOGNIZES DEPENDS ON ITS FREE ACCEPTANCE BY ITS PEOPLE.

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